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There are three kinds of pearl-producing oysters in the Gulf; the *Mahharah*, the pearl-oyster proper, which is a most prolific source, which is found all over the Gulf from just below the low-water mark to eighteen fathoms; the *Zanniyah*, which are found in the vicinity of Ras-al-Khaimah; and the *Sadaifiyah*, which does not often yield pearls, but has been known to produce specimens of large and fine quality. The *Mahharahs* grow to about two inches in diameter and are collected when two or three years old. Pearl-oysters are prone to disease and the effects of submarine gases; some years ago a chemical disturbance occurred in the sea-bed off Bahrain. The sea became reddish and turbid, and oysters on some of the beds were found to be dead or diseased and produced no pearls.

The Arabs call the pearl *lulu*, and the Persians *marwarid*, and although both of these terms are frequently heard in the trade, the commonest word in Oman is *qumash*, which also means piece-goods. According to Professor W. A. Herdman, one of the world's greatest experts, the formation of a pearl in an oyster is an abnormal occurrence, and is usually caused by the intrusion of a minute parasite—the opaque, white, globular larva of a cestode worm (*genus Tetrarhynous*). While it inhabits the body of the oyster it is from .07 to .53 millimetres long. It has a curious history. At first it is a free-swimming larva in the sea; at this stage it makes its way into the oyster where it is surrounded by a cyst of nacreous matter. If the oyster is not disturbed the cestode then passes into the file-fish, which preys upon the oyster, and reaches its final or adult stage in the shark or ray, by which in its turn the file-fish is devoured —a curious example of the vicious circle of life. Dr. Kelaart, who died in 1859, was the first scientist to connect the formation of pearls with vermin parasites.

Not all pearls are 'cyst' pearls, however; some are due to causes other than parasitic invasion. Also, only about one cyst in a hundred is pearl-bearing. There are 'muscle' pearls, the interiors of which contain a tiny calcareous concretion, and 'ampulla' pearls, the nucleus of which may be a grain of sand or some other inorganic particle. Another common variety is the so-called 'blister' pearl, attached to the interior of the oyster shell; it is formed by the irritation caused by boring animals which work through from the outside. These can hardly be considered as pearls and have little value.

Pearls vary greatly in colour, shape and quality, yet these are